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HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY



INTRODUCTION

WHENEVER a great invention succeeds, it is inevitable that conflicting claims of discovery should be made. Photography is no exception to this rule, and historians of photography have lately made the national rivalry between Britain and France more acute. British writers generally claim the honour for Fox Talbot, who made the first paper negative in 1835, while French writers give all the glory either to Nicéphore Niepce, for his various achievements in 1816-1826 or to Daguerre, for his first 'sun-picture' made in 1837.

In this history of photography we try to avoid the controversy which, in fact, had little to do with the making and the phenomenal rise of photography. True, there was rivalry between Fox Talbot and Daguerre, but there was also intensive co-operation between British and French scientists in spite of the slow communications of the times. The creative forces of this co-operation overshadow all personal rivalry. In the course of the hundred and odd years which this necessarily incomplete history of photography covers, the scientific co-operation of the nations gained in importance. Britain contributed to progress with such decisive improvements as the dry plate. The United

States made the world a present of the roll-film and the roll-film camera. In the history of the moving pictures, we see clearly how the interchange of scientific research facilitated the task of such creative minds as Le Prince and the Brothers Lumière. Germany's greatest contribution was undoubtedly the discovery of the X-ray.

Technical progress in the future depends even more on international co-operation than has been the case in the past. The mightiest country with the largest laboratories is not big enough for the solution of the still outstanding problems of photography.

These observations on scientific co-operation can also be fully applied to the realm of aesthetics. There is no epoch during the last hundred years when a specific British, French, American or German conception of beauty in photography could be discerned. In times of aesthetic decline, the downfall was general and international. The same was the case when higher aesthetic values came to the fore. In this respect the smaller communities possess the same chances as the greatest nations. Technical progress depends, as we saw, on the magnitude of laboratory equipment and this is the reason why for a long time to come the United States, technically ahead of the world, will be called on to make by far the greatest contribution. The sense of beauty, independent of such considerations, is everywhere at home. That is why France retained the leadership in artistic photography. And that is why photography, the most democratic of all arts, could become an instrument in the making of an international community of hundreds of millions in pursuit of beauty.

HENRY GUTTMANN

THE EXHIBITS

1. The Origins of Photography
2. The Fathers of Photography
3. Daguerre and his Invention
4. Fox Talbot and his Work
5. The Short-lived Triumph of Daguerreotypy
6. Calotypes and other Paper Processes
7. David Octavius Hill
8. Albumen and Collodion Negatives
9. The Beginning of Modern Photography
10. French Realism: Nadar
11. Victorian Photography: Julia Margaret Cameron
12. First News Pictures
13. Early War Photographs
14. Gelatine Plate, Celluloid Film and Rapid Shutters
15. Press Photography
16. The Pictorialists
17. Realism in Photography
18. Technical Progress
19. Scientific Research
20. The Origin of Motion Pictures
21. The History of the Film
22. Colour Photography
23. Photography since 1919
24. Photography and the People's War

The Arts Council of Great Britain is most grateful to Mr. Henry Guttman for organizing this exhibition, which gives an outline of the history and development of photography in the last hundred years. The Council is also very grateful to him for putting at their disposal his large library of photographs of all periods.

**OTHER ARTS COUNCIL
EXHIBITIONS**

British Drawings from the Tate Gallery

C.E.M.A. Collection

Chinese Woodcuts

Clowns and Comics

Contemporary Paintings (4th exhibition)

Colour and Pattern in India

Design at Home

Dutch Paintings of the 17th Century

French Book Illustration, 1895-1945

Holbein

Portraits and Portrait Groups

Recording Britain (Two Collections)

The Artist and the Church

The History of Photography

What is Modern Painting?

The Art of Film

The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, 1945

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